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U.S. Department of Justice
Tax Division

Opportunities For Secretaries

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Introduction

The primary role of the Tax Division is to serve as lawyer for the Internal Revenue Service in all federal courts except the United States Tax Court. Our challenge is to insure that the nation's tax laws are fairly and uniformly enforced.

In performing their duties, the attorneys of the Tax Division carry out many tasks. In the Civil Trial Sections, our attorneys must bring or defend actions in the various federal courts throughout the country. The formal pleadings, motion papers, discovery documents, requested jury charges, briefs and substantial correspondence that must be prepared in connection with this litigation and the internal memoranda that underlie these court-filings constitute the life-blood of the Division. In the Criminal Section, while many similar documents are prepared, the bulk of the work consists of preparing internal memoranda which form the basis for a decision whether a taxpayer who has allegedly violated the tax laws should be indicted and prosecuted. In the Appellate Section, attorneys not only draft memoranda recommending action by the Department with respect to appeals, but prepare and file briefs and other papers in the United States courts of appeals, with the Solicitor General's office, and in the Supreme Court of the United States.

To a very significant extent, the Tax Division's work is judged by the timeliness, appearance and quality of the documents prepared by the Tax Division secretaries. For this reason, the Division long has exercised extreme care in the selection of new secretarial candidates, has provided its staff with the computers and word processing equipment necessary to get the work done, and has provided training to sharpen the skills of our professional legal secretaries. While speed and accuracy are important, the Tax Division's secretaries are encouraged to offer suggestions and assistance to attorneys

in improving every document. This means that Division secretaries not only type, but are also asked to read the documents they prepare to assure that they are accurate and understandable. Legal secretaries must become familiar with legal terms and citations as well as the federal tax litigation system. The best secretaries in the Division are in a real sense members of a team with their attorneys, collaborating on each case assigned to them to assure the best possible representation of the United States in court.

The Division has a proud reputation in the courts of our country. It is an exciting and rewarding place to work for those who are prepared to give their very best efforts in order to make a real difference in the quality of justice for all.

The Tax Division — Its Function and Purpose

There are eleven sections in the Tax Division, one of the several divisions of the United States Department of Justice. The work of these sections includes criminal and civil litigation at the trial and appellate levels, the negotiation of the settlement of cases, the planning of litigation strategy, and the evaluation of the desirability of criminal prosecutions. We also conduct legal research on proposed legislation on which we have been asked to comment. The latter includes drafting legislative language which the Division wishes to propose, and consideration of various matters of litigation policy.

To carry out these duties, the Tax Division has a staff of about 300 attorneys, 20 paralegals and 240 nonlegal support personnel, the majority of whom are legal secretaries. This makes the role of the secretary an important, integral one in carrying out the work of the Division. The duties can be quite varied, ranging from the routine tasks of answering telephones and filing, to the important coordination and transmittal of pleadings (legal documents) and memoranda.

The Role of the Legal Secretary

A secretary who joins one of the sections of the Tax Division will become an experienced legal secretary. The basic skill we look for can be divided into two categories, one technical and one personal.

On the technical side, applicants should have a solid background in typing. The ability to take and transcribe shorthand, while helpful, is by no means a necessity. Experience on modern word processing equipment is also helpful, but not required. We provide all secretaries the training they need to make full use of the Division's modern word processing equipment.

On the personal side, we are on the lookout for competent, intelligent and responsible persons who are interested in learning to be topnotch secretaries and who have the aptitude and willingness to learn our office procedures.

The position of a legal secretary in the Tax Division is a challenging but rewarding one. The work is hard, the pace often frantic; however, we think we have a very desirable position to offer because it is one of the few in the Government where the secretaries, in coordination with the attorneys, are directly responsible for representing the Government in court.

The Duties of a Legal Secretary in the Tax Division

Secretaries in the Tax Division are assigned to two or more attorneys who are their direct supervisors. Secretaries are also under the supervision of one nonlegal supervisor, the section staff assistant.

The specific duties of a Tax Division secretary vary from section to section. Technical duties include dictation, if you are a stenographer; the typing of letters, memoranda, legal briefs and other pleadings; and, of course, proofing for accuracy and style. An attractive work product presented well says much in your favor.

Secretaries in the Appellate Section are responsible for the typing, proofing and grammatical accuracy of legal briefs filed in the United States Courts of Appeals. An important part of the proofing process includes checking the accuracy of the cases cited in each brief. This requires the use of the Tax Division's law library. The ability to check citations correctly is learned easily on the job and enhances your legal knowledge. Brief writing also is done by our Claims Court Section and the Civil Trial Sections and entails the same responsibilities.

Our Criminal Section secretaries have somewhat different duties. They type lengthy prosecution memoranda in addition to briefs and other documents for court.

Training

The Tax Division affords ample opportunity for any job-related training. Many skills are learned in the Division's Office of Training. Additional training is provided through the Career Management Group, Justice Management Division, the Office of Personnel Management, or a nongovernment vendor — at no cost to you.

Some on-site training includes instruction on the use of automated office equipment such as the IBM 5520 Administrative System and microcomputers. We anticipate a greater use of computer technology to make more efficient, flexible use of the secretaries' time.

Promotions

Promotions are given on the basis of merit, not the length of service or time in grade. If you merit a promotion, the usual minimum period between grades is one year.

Security and Character Investigations

All employees are subject to security and character investigations and a one-year probationary period.

Insurance and Retirement Plans

Each employee may participate in a variety of low-cost group hospitalization, surgical and life insurance

plans in which the Government shares the cost. You also participate in the Federal Employees Retirement System and may, if you choose, participate in the Thrift Savings Plan. The Thrift Savings Plan is managed by the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board, an independent Federal agency whose sole responsibility is to operate the Plan and manage its investments. Contributions to, and earnings in, the Thrift Savings Plan are tax-deferred.

Leave and Vacation

During the first three years of service, an employee receives 13 days' annual leave with pay each year; after three years, this is increased to 20 days a year; it is increased to 26 days after 15 years. In addition, each employee is entitled to 13 days of sick leave each year, which accumulates year after year if not used, and thus protects the employee from loss of salary due to illness.

Transportation Expenses

A new employee must pay all travel and transportation expenses to Washington, D.C., unless the Government specifically authorizes reimbursement.

Location

The offices of the Tax Division are located in the Main Justice Building and the Judiciary Center Building in the heart of Washington, D.C.

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